

Indiana

Paths to Quality

Standards for Participation

Licensed Child Care Center

## **Licensed Child Care Centers Level 1**

Level 1 Licensed Child Care Centers will be able to:

- Meet minimum health and safety standards
- Develop and implement basic health and safety policies and procedures.

Licensed Child Care Centers meet the standards for a level 1 rating providing the following are met:

- 1. The license issued by Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), the Division of Family Resources (DFR) is current and in good standing.**

## Licensed Child Care Center Level 2

Level 2 Licensed Child Care Centers will be able to:

- Provide an environment that is welcoming, nurturing, and safe for the physical, emotional, and social well-being of all children
- Provide a variety of learning materials that reflect the age, interests, and abilities of each child
- Provide for children's language and literacy skill development
- Provide pertinent program information to families
- Promote staff development and training

Licensed Child Care Centers meet the standards for a level 2 rating providing the following are met:

1. All requirements of Level 1 are met.
2. Director receives orientation and trains staff on the *Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards for Young Children Age Birth to Five*.
3. Director is a member of a nationally recognized early childhood organization.
4. Program has a written philosophy and goals for children.
5. 25% of teaching staff have either a Child Development Associate credential (CDA) or equivalent certificate, OR an early childhood degree or equivalent degree, OR have completed 45 clock hours of educational training leading to an Early Childhood/Child Development degree or CDA credential.
6. At least 50% of teaching staff participate annually in a minimum of 15 clock hours of educational or in-service training focused on topics relevant to early childhood.
7. A system is in place for communicating pertinent information to families, daily and in an annual family conference.

8. An advisory board is in place to provide input and support to the director.
9. Classroom environments are welcoming, nurturing and safe for children to have interactions and experiences that promote the physical, social and emotional well being of children. Indicators include:
  - Each child and his/her family are warmly acknowledged upon arrival and departure.
  - Each child feels safe, accepted, and protected and this is supported by guidelines that reinforce respect for people, feelings, ideas, and materials.
  - Children are under adult supervision at all times.
  - The environment includes representation of each child and family (including all age groups, abilities, and cultures), such as books, pictures, photographs, music/songs, games, toys, dress-up clothes/materials, and foods.
  - Each child's individuality and cultural background is valued and respected by the provider.
  - A place for storage of personal belongings and possessions is labeled with child's name.
  - Teachers communicate with and listen to children (verbal and non-verbal messages) with lots of one-on-one attention throughout the day and usually at eye-level, including time when the teacher is down on the floor with the children.
  - Children's ideas, requests, and questions are acknowledged with a verbal response or physical gesture.
  - Children's feelings are acknowledged with an accepting, non-critical verbal response or physical gesture.
  - Teachers refrain from negative verbal or physical responses to children at all times, such as yelling, criticizing, scolding, threatening, sarcasm, name calling, yanking, pinching, squeezing, or spanking.
  - Destructive or disruptive behavior is addressed with children (face-to-face rather than from a distance) by the teacher, explaining the effect of the behavior, stating the desired behavior and redirecting, or helping the child make alternate choices.
  - Although limits/consequences exist, the caregiver refrains from too many restrictions in the environment and rarely uses "no", except in dangerous situations.

- Conflicts are resolved by/with children through a problem-solving approach (acknowledge feelings, listen to children share what happened, ask for ideas or solutions, and follow through).
- The teacher plays interactive games, and joins in children's play, expanding upon their ideas.
- The classroom is generally characterized by varying sounds or comfortable conversation and spontaneous laughter from happy, involved children and adults.

**9a. Specific Infant/Toddler Indicators Include:**

- Infants are frequently held, comforted when crying, and given one-to-one attention during feeding and diapering.
- Teachers engage in many one-to-one face-to-face interactions with infants/toddlers, including singing and playful interactions.
- Teachers acknowledge infant/toddler babblings with a verbal response, vocal imitation or physical gesture.
- Teachers engage in meaningful conversations with toddlers.
- Teachers give toddlers simple words to use to express feelings. Verbal toddlers are then encouraged to use words in conflict situations.

**10. Daily schedule provides ample time for child-directed choices with activities and materials that are geared to the age, interests, and abilities of each child. Indicators include:**

- The daily schedule is consistent and predictable but relaxed and can be adapted for individual children as needed.
- The classroom is arranged with areas for individual, small group, and large group activities.
- Children are encouraged to choose the area in which they want to participate, and whether they want to play alone, with one friend, or with several.
- Routine tasks (such as labeling, sorting, classifying, folding clothes, counting while cleaning up or setting the table) are viewed as learning opportunities.
- Transitions are generally relaxed and allow time for play and completing activities. Idle sitting and waiting time are avoided.
- Meal time is relaxed, with no scolding or nagging. Children are encouraged to sample new foods but allowed to eat the foods of their choice.

- Nap time is relaxed with alternative quiet activities available for the non-nappers. Individual napping schedules are respected for infants/toddlers.
- The teacher has a system for rotating toys and materials for variety so that unused toys are stored and later reintroduced.
- TV/VCR/DVD, if used, is primarily an educational experience. Caregiver discusses what is viewed with children, and provides an alternative activity; OR TV/VCR/DVD is not used at all.

**10a. Outdoor Play Time:**

- Outdoor play is included daily (weather permitting with temperatures not below 25 or above 85 degrees). Active indoor play may be a replacement when necessary.
- Outdoor/large motor activities and plentiful play materials for a variety of skills are offered (for example, climbing, running, jumping, balancing, riding and playing with balls).

**10b. The classroom is arranged and utilizes plentiful materials and activities in order to provide various age and developmentally appropriate interest centers that invite children's exploration. Indicators include:**

- **Reading:**  
Books, soft washable seating/pillows for use while reading
- **Writing:**  
Writing tools, paper, envelopes, typewriter, letters, numbers
- **Art:**  
Drawing materials (crayons, markers, thick pencils, variety of paper, sizes and types, not coloring books or dittos/worksheets)  
Painting materials  
Tools (scissors, hole punch, tape), staplers for school-age children  
Three-dimensional materials (play dough, clay with tools)  
Collage materials (catalogs, magazines, paper scraps, fabric pieces, string, yarn, cotton balls, pipe cleaners, craft sticks)
- **Blocks:**  
Different size/types of blocks and accessories such as small people, animals, vehicles, road signs, and materials to enhance building, sticks, stones, tape, string, craft sticks, interlocking blocks.

- **Dramatic Play:**  
Dress-up clothes, such as work boots, high heels, a variety of hats, career gear/attire/uniforms, purses, billfolds and multi-cultural outfits. Other items would also include large pieces of fabric/scarves, child-size play furniture, dishes, pots, pans, dolls (multicultural dolls included), dollhouse or other play-sets, accessories for dolls, and “props” for different themes.
- **Math/Numbers:**  
Small objects to count/sort/classify, measuring tools (scales, rulers), numbers/shapes, number games, puzzles and pattern blocks
- **Music and Movement:**  
Audio equipment, variety of tapes/CDs, music boxes, musical toys, and instruments, dance props such as scarves/streamers.
- **Nature and Science:**  
Collections of natural items (shells, rocks, flowers, bugs), living plants, pets to care for, science games, toys, magnets, magnifying glasses, cooking opportunities.
- **Sensory Play:**  
Water, play dough, sand, or similar material (such as corn meal, rice, beans, oatmeal), along with kitchen utensils, measuring containers, shovel, trough, buckets, small cars and trucks and water-play accessories for pouring, measuring, squeezing, and basting.
- **Small Motor/Manipulative:**  
Blocks, puzzles, crayons, pencils, scissors, interlocking blocks and other small building toys, pegboard and pegs, games, counting materials, sorting or classifying materials and containers.

**10c. Specific Infant/Toddler indicators include:**

- Open spaces for exploring and protected play.
- Infants and toddlers are provided a variety of outdoor play experiences.
- Soft, washable elements, such as cuddle toys, soft furniture or cushions.
- Enough materials to avoid problems with children making the same toy choice and waiting.
- Materials are organized consistently on low, open shelves for independent use by children.
- Materials are sturdy and in good condition.
- A variety of open-ended, washable toys, such as rattles, teething rings, balls, pop beads, nesting toys, containers, cuddle toys, push/pull toys are available.
- Low, stable furniture is available for children to pull themselves up.

- Furniture adapted for toddlers is available.
- Toddler activities include building, pretending, experiencing art materials, enjoying stories and books, playing with toys, exploring sensory materials, having fun with music and movement.

**11. Children are read to daily and encouraged to explore books and other print materials. Indicators include:**

- Teachers read/ look at books with children daily.
- Books are available and accessible daily for children to look at and enjoy on their own.
- Teachers take time to use books or read with children during quiet, individual lap time.
- Children are invited to tell stories or “read” a picture book.
- Children are encouraged to explore print and writing as they scribble, invent spellings, write their names or other words, and make books.
- Teachers write words dictated by children as they tell a story or describe their pictures.
- A variety of writing materials (markers, child-sized pencils, chalk and board), materials to use with writing (paper, envelopes, stamps, tape, paper punch, stickers, magazines, calendars) and toys (telephones, puppets, tape recorder, alphabet letters, flannel boards) are available.
- Teachers engage in many one-to-one, face-to-face interactions, including singing and playful interactions.
- Preschoolers are provided language materials daily, in addition to books, such as puppets, flannel boards, recorded stories, and picture card games.
- Books for preschoolers include a variety of imaginative, rhyming, and informational books.
- Books for school-age children include a variety of reading levels and topics, such as adventures, mysteries, and informational books and magazines.

**11a. Specific Infant/Toddler Indicators include:**

- Books are durable, with simple pictures and short stories about everyday activities.
- Sturdy, simple books and pictures of real objects are accessible to toddlers each day to look at on their own.
- Each infant/toddler is given opportunity daily for at least one language activity using books, pictures, or puppets.
- Toddlers are encouraged to scribble with crayons.



- Teachers respond to sounds/speech, including by imitating infants' vocalizations and engaging toddlers in conversation.
- Teachers talk about objects and events that infants and toddlers experience.
- Teachers use books or read with children during quiet, individual lap time.

## Licensed Child Care Center Level 3

Level 3 Licensed Child Care Centers will be able to:

- Implement a planned curriculum that addresses the stages of child development
- Demonstrate professional growth of Director and staff in excess of licensing requirements
- Facilitate family and staff input into the program
- Establish a strategic plan
- May be working towards accreditation

Child Care Centers meet the standards for a Level 3 rating provided that the following are met:

1. All requirements for Level 1 and 2 are met.
2. Program has been in operation for a minimum of one year.
3. At a minimum, the Lead Teacher receives paid planning time.
4. 50% of teaching staff have either a CDA or equivalent certificate, an early childhood degree or equivalent degree OR completed 60 clock hours of educational training leading to an early childhood/child development degree or CDA credential.
5. At least 50% of teaching staff participate annually in a minimum of 20 clock hours of educational or in-service training focused on topics relevant to early childhood.
6. Program evaluation is completed annually by families and staff.
7. A strategic plan is completed and includes annual evaluation/ goal setting and long range planning/goal setting.
8. A written curriculum reflects program philosophy and goals and is based on child development/appropriate practice.

**9. The program demonstrates a planned curriculum that provides for the various ages, ability levels, and developmental stages of the children. This curriculum meets the following requirements:**

- A written curriculum provides a framework for children's physical, cognitive, language, literacy, and social-emotional development. It includes goals for children that are consistent with Indiana Foundations for Young Children.
- The written curriculum may be developed by individual programs, providing it addresses the above mentioned topics, or a nationally recognized, developmentally appropriate curriculum.
- Staff members are oriented to the curriculum. Lead teachers plan with assistants so that curriculum can be implemented effectively to provide support for children in their active learning experiences.
- Families are made aware of the curriculum of the program through parent handbooks, newsletters, orientation, and/or family meetings.
- The curriculum and goals for children are reflected in everyday practice including through daily, weekly, or monthly written lesson plans.
- Assessment is appropriate to the curriculum and focuses on children's strengths. It may include portfolios, conversations, anecdotal notes, and developmental notes.

**10. Children's physical, cognitive, language, literacy, math, and creative development is supported. Indicators include:**

- Many opportunities for communication (all ages), including sharing information, pointing out logical relationships, and encouraging children's ability to reason, reading, and writing (for toddler age and up) are provided throughout the day.
- Every day children have many experiences and materials to encourage imagination and creativity.
- Children's thinking is stimulated through experimentation, exploration, and access to interesting materials and adult support.
- Displays of children's art are available at children's eye level and show that most art work is exploratory and unique to each child.
- Teachers encourage language and literacy development through interactions, books, songs, finger plays, puppet play, and writing/drawing opportunities.
- Math experiences are a part of everyday activities and routines (use of numbers during meals, setting a table, during transition times, using a timer to take turns, counting who is absent).

- Music experiences include singing, creative movement, a variety of types of music, and a variety of musical and rhythmic instruments.
- Science exploration is part of daily activities (examples include, collections of natural objects, living things to care for, cooking, and simple experiments).
- The daily schedule provides a balance of activities including: quiet/active, individual/small group/large group, child initiated/adult initiated. Infants and toddlers are not expected to function as a large group.
- Large group activities are not excessive for any part of the daily routine.
- Children, especially infants/toddlers, have a variety of sensory-awakening experiences.

**11. Children are actively engaged throughout the day in making choices of activities and materials. Indicators include:**

- Children should be given several free choice periods daily. Children's choice (individual or small group play) occurs at least one third of the time and includes indoor and outdoor play.
- The teacher supports children's development through observation and gathering information that is used to guide lesson planning.
- The teacher supports children's play by providing additional materials and experiences that expand on children's interests and skills.
- The teacher extends learning for children by talking about what they are doing and asking questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" response, such as "What would happen if...?", "Can you tell me about...?", "How could we get that to work?".
- The teacher finds ways to help children learn skills when they show an interest (zipping, tying, writing name).
- The teacher takes advantage of the many natural learning experiences associated with daily life and makes those "teachable moments" opportunities for learning.

**12. The learning environment is developmentally and culturally appropriate and meets any special needs of the children. Indicators include:**

- Children feel a sense of belonging in the classroom, by having a labeled space for their personal items, and a personal sleeping area.
- Children are taught to be considerate of each other's work and possessions.

- Children are taught to understand and respect others. The teacher answers children's questions about differences in a respectful and factual way.
- All children and their families have equal opportunities to participate in classroom and program activities.
- Space is arranged to provide children of different ages and abilities access to materials and an opportunity to engage in play and projects without limitation or interference from one another.
- A plan is in place for effectively working with children with special needs, including behavioral needs and adaptation of materials and space.
- The teacher includes children in age-appropriate self-help activities, such as dressing, picking up toys, washing hands, folding clothes, serving food, and setting or cleaning up meals.

## Licensed Child Care Center Level 4

Level 4 Licensed Child Care Centers will be able to:

- Meet the highest standards for high quality early care and education
- Director agrees to assist other programs in quality improvement through volunteer mentoring

Licensed Child Care Centers meet the standards for Level 4 rating provided that the following are met:

- 1. Program meets all the requirements for Levels 1, 2, and 3.**
- 2. Accreditation by a nationally recognized accrediting body, approved by the State, has been achieved and maintained.**
- 3. Director volunteers to informally mentor a program at a Level 1, 2, or 3.**